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## FBI Admits It Opened Mail in 8 Cities in Illegal Program Parallel to That of CIA

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WASHINGTON—The FBI said Wednesday it had opened mail illegally in Los Angeles, San Francisco and six other cities in a program paralleling that of the CIA.

Providing the first details of its mail surveillance project, James B. Adams, deputy associate director, said that FBI agents opened mail for "national security" purposes between 1940 and 1966.

In New York City, an estimated 42 million pieces of mail were examined by agents from Oct. 1, 1959, to July 22, 1966, he said. Of these, 1,011 pieces were opened, Adams told members of a House postal facilities subcommittee.

Rep. Charles H. Wilson (D-Calif.), the subcommittee chairman, said that the figure sounded too low and instructed Adams to supply details on the other cities. Adams said he would try to do so, but insisted, "We do not have adequate records on this program."

In addition to New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco, letters were opened in Boston, Washington, Detroit, Seattle and Miami, Adams said.

After Adams gave additional testimony in closed session, a subcommittee source termed the program "very indiscriminate." The mail of antiwar groups and political extremists often was opened under the mandate of national security, the source said.

Adams did not explain why the FBI's mail program was terminated in 1966. This was the same year, however, that the late J. Edgar Hoover, then FBI director, also gave written orders ending break-ins in "domestic subversion cases."

As described by Adams, the FBI's mail program was similar to that of the CIA, which opened an estimated 13,000 letters a year to and from Communist countries between 1953 and 1973. Wilson's subcommittee has been investigating since the two agencies acknowledged the practice earlier this year.

The FBI sought to find foreign agents in the United States and U.S. citizens who might "sell out this country to hostile foreign powers," Adams said. The CIA's mail project was aimed principally at gathering foreign intelligence, but copies of thousands of letters a year also were passed to the FBI by the CIA.

Adams testified that there was "no statutory basis" for the FBI's actions. But after the program was abandoned in 1966 the bureau continued to accept mail intelligence from the CIA—ranging from 6,256 letters in 1967 to 1,353 in 1972, he said.

Wilson's subcommittee has found no indication so far that any President knew about or approved these projects.

According to previous testimony, the CIA's mail project was terminated under pressure from the Postal Service in February, 1973. CIA director William E. Colby has called the activity improper.

Declaring that the FBI mail program had been useful, Adams told the subcommittee that a U.S. citizen who had offered to sell antiballistic missile information to a foreign agent had been detected through a letter.

Asked later by reporters if the citizen had been prosecuted, Adams said no. He said government lawyers had

decided that the evidence was tainted because the FBI lacked authority to open mail.

By law, the FBI may open mail only upon issuance of a warrant by a federal judge. No warrant is needed, however, for local, state, or federal agencies to institute a "mail cover," which means secretly examining the envelopes.

Adams said the FBI currently has 79 mail covers in progress.